

Aquifer Timeline

This timeline highlights important Aquifer milestones relating to its discovery, initial investigations and use. EXPO '74 represented a change in the community's relationship to the Aquifer from exploitation of an "unlimited" resource to understanding how best to ensure continued wise use of the Aquifer water. Recent efforts to understand and protect the Aquifer are presented on page 22.

1881
Northern Pacific Railroad
arrives and provides an
economic boost to the region.

1888

For the next few years, Spokane investigates potential water sources for its expanding water system. Under consideration are: springs near the Little Spokane River, Hayden Lake, and a dam east of the City.

1890
Idaho becomes the
43rd state.

1905

Between 1898 and 1905 Spokane upgrades the pumping capacity at the Upriver Dam several times. In 1905 while excavating for a new pump station foundation, workers encounter the same high water conditions found near the site in 1894. This time, city engineers deduce the existence of the Aquifer.

1923

Dr. J. Harlan Bretz makes two presentations to the Geological Society of America proposing that the Channeled Scablands of eastern Washington were formed by catastrophic flooding. He had discovered the geologic process that created the Aquifer. His idea was not generally accepted for another 20 to 30 years.

1931

Under contract to the Washington Water Power Company, E. R. Fosdick prepares the first comprehensive study of groundwater in the Spokane Valley and Rathdrum Prairie.

1938
A survey of all major rivers and waterways found the Spokane River the foulest water body in the state of Washington.

1972
Federal Clean Water Act: Section 208 provided authority and funding for Aquifer protection planning efforts.

Page 22

1860
James Madison
Alden paints "Plante's
Crossing" shown on
page 3.

1884
Spokane purchases
a private waterworks
located in the old Echo
Mill on Havermale
Island as the beginning
of a city water system
using the Spokane
River as a water
source.

1889
Washington becomes
the 42nd state.

1906
Post Falls Dam
begins operation.

1894

Upriver Dam and a pump station are built to provide 10 million gallons of water river daily to the City. While constructing the pump station foundation, so much water is encountered that the foundation is built six feet higher than designed. Although unrecognized at the time, the contractor had discovered the Aquifer.

1908
Spokane's health officer issues a boil water notice for all river water in early 1908. After testing the Aquifer water, City officials authorize construction of a well near the Upriver Dam site. By the fall of 1908, the Aquifer becomes the City's primary drinking water source.

1929-1934
Grand Coulee Dam is constructed.

1940
Joesph T. Pardee,
a USGS geologist,
presents a paper to the
American Association
for the Advancement
of Science proposing
that an Ice Age glacial
lake (Lake Missoula) in
present day Montana
had drained rapidly.
Pardee had discovered
the source of Bretz's
catastrophic floods.

1974
EXPO '74 opens in Spokane, Washington, with the theme: "Celebrating Tomorrow's Fresh New Environment." EXPO's headquarters are located on Havermale Island, the site of the City's first water system.

